

House Democrats elected current Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer as their whip Wednesday, ensuring he will remain in the one of the party's highest posts when it assumes the minority in January.

The vote came after Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif., 8th), who won her election for minority leader, gave a tacit endorsement for Hoyer (D-Md., 5th) to remain her top lieutenant Saturday, when she announced the creation of a new leadership position, assistant speaker, and her wish that Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-S.C., 6th) fill it.

"I am deeply honored that my colleagues have elected me minority whip for the next Congress," Hoyer said in a statement. "I look forward to working with Members on both sides of the aisle to create jobs and foster long-term economic growth here in Maryland and throughout our nation."

Democrats lost 64 House seats in the Nov. 2 election and will resign the chamber's majority and its highest leadership position when the 112th Congress convenes Jan. 3. As expected, Republicans unanimously approved current Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio, 8th) as the next speaker and whip Eric Cantor (R-Va., 7th) as majority leader.

In the wake of their electoral losses, many Democrats expected Pelosi, a polarizing figure targeted by Republican candidates throughout the 2010 campaign season, to resign her leadership post and for Hoyer to replace her at the top. But when Pelosi announced, to Republicans' delight, her intention to pursue minority leader via Twitter, it set up a potential showdown between Hoyer and Clyburn, neither of whom was ready to relinquish their spots in leadership.

Hoyer received public backing from moderate Democrats and several notable committee chairmen while Clyburn was endorsed by the 42-member Congressional Black Caucus, but Pelosi seemingly put an end to any internal squabbling by creating the new post, which will keep Clyburn as the No. 3 Democrat in the House.

As whip, Hoyer promised to, "hold Republicans to their rhetoric on fiscal responsibility and insist that they act consistently with it."

"All of us in this House are elected for a two-year term. But we must not pursue policies with nothing more than a two-year vision and a partisan, next-election mentality," Hoyer said. "The people expect more of us, and we must expect more of ourselves."

The caucus also approved Rep. Chris Van Hollen's (D-Md., 8th) bid to become the ranking member of the House Budget Committee, which figures to play a prominent role in any efforts to boost the economy and reign in fiscal spending. Van Hollen's ascension makes him the third Democratic representative with strong Maryland ties — Pelosi was born and raised in Baltimore — to hold a prominent position in the chamber.

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